THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) and (b) The Management of Air India suspended 46 pilots due to their refusal to operate the flights on various sectors. However, no pilot has been dismissed from the service as on date. The Management has revoked the suspension of all the 46 pilots. However, disciplinary proceeding is continuing against them.

(c) Air India has suffered an estiamted loss of Rs.3.7 crores on account of pilot strike during April-May, 2003. The Company has incurred an additional expenditure of about Rs. 200 crores during the financial year 2002-03 *vis-a-vis* 2001-02 partly due to 11% increase in average fuel prices.

(d) The Government of India and the Management of Air India took all necessary steps for minimizing the adverse impact on Air India's operations and avoiding inconvenience to passengers. Air India maintained all of its USA/UK Europe flights and only a few flights on other sectors were cancelled. Air India also initiated appropriate disciplinary action against the striking pilots. Air India's operations are now normal as per their commercial requirements.

Utilisation of limited open sky policy

1652. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 161 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 22nd July, 2003 and state:

(a) the details of the countries and Airlines making use of existing policy and having commercial agreement with Air India;

(b) whether any of the countries and Airlines are debarred from utilising the limited open sky policy; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) During the peak winter 2002-03 open sky policy, Lufthansa (Germany), Virgin Atlantic (UK), Emirates (Dubai) and Korean Air (South Korea) operated additional services. Also, airlines such as Singapore Airlines, South African Airways, Iran Air, Emirates, Austrian Airlines, Malaysian Airlines and Sri Lankan Airlines operated with bigger aircraft.

(b) and (c) Airlines from all countries were permitted to mount additional services under open sky policy for the period December, 2002 to 15th February, 2003 subject to commercial agreement with Air India. However, this limited pen sky policy was subsequently extended upto 30th June, 2003 for the airlines of Western Europe/USA only because of tourism potential and tourist demand from their airports.

Losses due to poor maintenance of aircrafts

1653. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Airlines has lost heavily on account of various discrepancies in aircraft fleet maintenance and revenue loss of about Rs. 200 crores due to grounding of A-300 and A-320 aircrafts;

(b) if so, what action has been taken by Government in this regard;

(c) whether it is also a fact that despite having facilities for carrying out major checks on A-320 aircrafts in India, 12 such aircrafts were sent abroad for check up and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) what action Government propose to take to avoid such losses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) Indian Airlines has sent 15 A-320 aircraft for major checks abroad since the year 1998 to 2002 for the reasons that:—

(i) As against the capacity available for undertaking 17 to 18 'C checks per year the arisings were more than 20 'C checks.

(ii) It was not economical to start/create a second line of major maintenance to cater to the small number of excess arisings.

(iii) The deployment of aircraft are so planned that the maximum engine arisings are during the loan season. Since the capacity available for major maintenance is limited, Indian Airlines sends some of the aircrafts abroad to ensure that the full fleet is available for operations during the peak season.